



**TEXAS SHRIMP ASSOCIATION**  
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**Reference: RFI Response: Interagency Seafood Trade Task Force**

The Texas Shrimp Association (TSA) would like to thank President Trump and all involved in forming this much needed Seafood Task Force and we look forward providing our concerns and input to help make positive changes to our industry.

The Texas Shrimp Association (TSA) is a nonprofit organization that provides education to lawmakers, the media, Government organizations, and consumers at large about the importance of protecting and growing the Texas commercial shrimping industry.

**BELOW ARE 3 PRIMARY ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY**

**A. Our industry has shrunk by 70% over the last 25 years due to the costly regulations and the flood of cheap – unregulated imported shrimp**

The cost to own and operate a commercial fishing vessel (F/V) is 3 X higher today than 25 year ago (the cost to purchase a boat + the 13,000 regulations bestowed upon our industry). We are the 13<sup>th</sup> most regulated industry in the United States – a few regulations shy of the airline industry – costing the boat owner thousands of dollars each year. We estimate that approximately 20% of those who continue to fish are operating at a deficit or a net income below poverty levels and can only provide for their families with supplemental income derived from a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> job/business.

Although our industry is considered one of the most sustainable fisheries in the world, we have paid dearly for this accomplishment. Simply the TED (turtle excluder device) costs each boat owner approximately \$20 - \$30,000 per boat, per year to purchase the devices and the loss of production (we are essentially pulling a net with a hole in it). Millions of dollars have been spent each year for turtle conservation, yet not 1 penny has ever been allocated to the shrimpers to assist with the cost to purchase the gear. Now considering we are forced to compete with close to 2 billion pounds of imported

shrimp that enters our country virtually untested and unregulated (a high percentage containing banned US chemicals and antibodies - also with a high percentage of that shrimp harvested using slave labor), it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out why our seafood industry is in dire straights. The shrimp that is rejected by European countries is immediately destroyed, as they would never allow their consumers to consume this potentially harmful seafood. Therefore foreign countries simply send their shrimp to the U.S. as we welcome them with open arms. ***What a slap in the face to the hard working commercial fishermen. Why is our Government still allowing this to happen?***

**B. Consumers have no idea what they are consuming and paying for:**

Based on an informal survey conducted by TSA in 2017, 85% of (non chain) restaurants who convey to their consumers the shrimp they serve are American wild caught gulf shrimp or they illustrate this information on their menus are actually serving imported shrimp (survey details available per request). We estimate that no less than 10% of shrimp consumers will determine which restaurant to dine at, as they will NOT consumer imported shrimp – primarily for health reasons. This in itself would stabilize our industry.

***TSA recommends that all restaurants disclose the origin of their shrimp. This has to be enforceable – providing transparency for consumers who are currently paying a premium price for an inferior product. We also recommend some form of tax incentive for serving American seafood product.***

**C. Lack of qualified – experienced workers.**

The commercial fishing industry is an extremely expensive, risky, dangerous industry and we find that families are choosing a different career path; therefore we are unable to find experienced workers. Honestly, TSA does not have any thoughts as to a possible solution as the uniqueness and the above mentioned issues alienates most anyone from choosing this career path.

I have simply listed the top 3 issues that must be address immediately. As a boat owner myself, It's hard to sit back and watch what is actually taking place in our industry – its as though the United States prepared a playbook titled **“How to collapse an industry”** and they are following it to a T.

Please contact TSA with any questions and or concerns.

Thank You

*Andrea Hance*